CHAPTER V

THE JEW IN LETTERS

§1

PEOM the beginning of their association with Europe—
long before the present national languages and literatures
were known—Jews played a prominent share in
European cultural life. In Alexandria, when it was the
intellectual capital of the Hellenic world, there were
Jewish poets, Jewish playwrights, Jewish philosophers,
Jewish historians, all writing in Greek and with an eye
upon the plaudits of the non-Jewish public. One of the
first European Jews known to us by name is Caecilius
of Calacte, in Sicily, who flourished in the first century
B.C. at Borne. Characteristically enough, he was the
representative in his day of the Attic style of oratory,
in contradistinction to the verbose Asiatic style which
had begun to gain ground. Similarly, he and his Greek
friend Dionysius of Halicarnassus were the only ap-
preciative students of Latin literature at a time when it
was the fashion to sneer at it in literary circles. The
body of his work must have been considerable, though
not much has survived. However, there can be little
doubt that there is due to him the famous passage in
the classic treatise on *The Sublime,* ascribed to Longinus,
which permeated English thought in the eighteenth
century: " Sublimity is the echo of

greatness of soul. This is illustrated . . . from the legislator of the Jews, no ordinary man, . * . who wrote in the opening words of his Laws: [c]God said, Let there be light,